IN THE CLAIMS

Claims 1-19 (Cancelled)

20. (Original) A system for removing body tissue, comprising:

a brush member dimensioned for introduction into a target site within a body, said brush member having a plurality of bristle members defining a capacity for carrying body tissue, said brush member capable of being manipulated within said body to thereby receive body tissue within said brush member such that said body tissue may be carried and thereafter removed from said body; and

a protector dimensioned to be positioned near an entrance into said target site, said protector establishing a barrier between said brush member and at least a portion of the body tissue adjacent to said entrance.

21. (Original) The system of claim 20, wherein said protector comprises a cannula dimensioned to extend to said entrance of said target site, said cannula having an inner lumen dimensioned to slideably receive said brush member for passage into said target site.

22. (Original) The system of claim 21, wherein said cannula includes a handle member for directing said cannula to said entrance of said target site.

23. (Original) The system of claim 22, wherein said brush member includes a stem member, and further comprising a drive assembly capable of engaging with said stem member for manipulating said brush member within said target site.

24. (Original) The system of claim 23, wherein said drive assembly comprises one of a powered drive assembly coupled to said stem member and a manual drive assembly coupled to said stem member.

25. (Original) The system of claim 24, wherein said powered drive assembly is a power drill.

26. (Original) The system of claim 24, wherein said manual drive assembly includes a handle member capable of being coupled to said stem member.

27. (Original) The system of claim 26, wherein said manual drive assembly includes an extension member coupled to said handle and a quick-connect coupling assembly for releasable connection to said stem member.

28. (Original) The system of claim 24, wherein said drive assembly includes a stop member coupled to said stem member for controlling the depth to which said brush member can be advanced into said target site.

29. (Original) The system of claim 21, wherein said body tissue adjacent to said entrance includes at least one of neural tissue, dura tissue, and vasculature adjacent to the spine, and wherein said cannula includes a lip member at a distal end thereof dimensioned to retract at least one of said neural tissue, dura tissue, and vasculature.

30. (Original) The system of claim 21, wherein said inner lumen of said cannula and said brush member have approximately the same cross-sectional shape.

31. (Original) The system of claim 20, wherein said protector comprises a retractor having at least one blade member for establishing a barrier between said brush member and said body tissue adjacent to said entrance.

32. (Original) The system of claim 31, wherein said body tissue adjacent to said entrance includes at least one of neural tissue and dura tissue of the spine, and wherein said retractor includes a first blade member for retracting said neural tissue and a second blade member for retracting said dura tissue.

33. (Original) The system of claim 32, wherein said first blade member and second blade member have a fixed angle therebetween.

34. (Original) The system of claim 32, wherein said first blade member and second blade member have a variable angle therebetween.

35. (Original) The system of claim 34, wherein said retractor includes a handle assembly for varying said angle between said first blade member and said second blade member.

36. (Original) The system of claim 20, wherein said target site is an intervertebral space, and wherein brush member is dimensioned to be introduced into said intervertebral space to receive, carry, and remove intervertebral disc material.

37. (Original) The system of claim 36, wherein said brush member is used to remove intervertebral disc material in order to thereafter introduce a spinal implant into said intervertebral space.

38. (Original) The system of claim 20, wherein said target site is a vertebral body, and wherein said brush member is dimensioned to be introduced into said vertebral body to receive, carry, and remove osseous material.

39. (Original) The system of claim 20, wherein said brush member and protector may be employed to remove body tissue during at least one of a percutaneous surgical procedure and an open surgical procedure.

Claims 40-57 (Cancelled)

Applicant has, through this Preliminary Amendment, cancelled from prosecution (without prejudice) claims 1-19 and 40-57. Claims 20-39 are currently pending. In the event that there are any questions concerning this submission or the application in general, the Examiner is cordially invited to telephone the undersigned attorney so that prosecution may be expedited.

Respectfully submitted,
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